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THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF SAINT PAUL. PERCY GARDNER, Litt.D.
G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1911. Pp. xvi, 263.

This book is based upon a careful reading of the Pauline Epistles in the light of the religious beliefs and practices of the Apostle's time. Professor Gardner of Oxford is an accomplished classical scholar and a representative of Anglican liberalism. His critical position, as he himself tells us, is in general that of Jülicher. He treats Ephesians as Pauline, though not without reservation; he uses the Book of Acts with caution; and the Pastoral Epistles are not taken into account. Unlike some recent German critics, the author emphasizes the significance of Paul's conversion near Damascus as being in truth a sudden change in the direction of his life, and as marking the beginning of the liberty which he enjoyed as a Christian. Dr. Gardner also holds that the Apostle's personal inspiration is a reality; for "some men seem capable of receiving impulses from an underlying life, as the iron rod is adapted to receive the lightning" (pp. 51 f.).

The most important and interesting part of the book is the discussion of the influence of the Greek and Oriental mysteries upon Paul's presentation of the gospel. The author holds that they exerted a profound and lasting influence upon Christianity, and that it was Paul who opened the gates and let this flood of mysticism rush into the Christian Church. "The best points in the Mysteries were absorbed by Christianity," and "the worse passed into magic" (p. 67). There can indeed be no doubt, in the light of modern investigation, that many religious beliefs and practices which were entirely foreign to Judaism and the teaching of Jesus were adopted by the Christian Church from its Graeco-Roman environment, and that Catholicism in its various forms is the product of this process of adoption and assimilation. For example, baptism was at first only a rite symbolizing repentance and forgiveness, and the Lord's Supper was a very simple religious meal observed by the disciples in memory of their Master. But the Mysteries, which were sacramental as well as soteriological religions, had their sacraments of purification and communion; and in the Pauline churches, which were confined to Gentile soil, baptism and the Lord's Supper were regarded as sacraments in the strict sense of the word. Dr. Gardner maintains, however, at least in the case of baptism, that there was no idea of any magical efficacy in the sacrament present to the Apostle's mind (pp. 107, 110, and 212). Was this transformation of the two primitive Christian institutions justifiable, and should the sacramental interpretation of them be retained? One may of

course answer in the affirmative; for, as the author points out, the question of origin is different from the question of value. But those whose criterion is the mind of Christ, and who desire to see his religious experience reduplicated in his followers, will return to the earlier, non-sacramental view of both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Paul's great and most distinctive contribution to the Christian Church, according to Professor Gardner, was his doctrine of salvation by faith, which "took its rise from personal spiritual experience" (p. 206). "His mystery of salvation by faith" was "not only the mainspring of his own life," but it has also been "the source of the best life of the Christian Church from that day to this. He felt in his own heart the power and influence of the spiritual force which was dawning on the world. . . . And because it was a reality and not a mere imagination, it inspired and thrilled" the great Apostle, and it has enthroned him "for all time as the Second Founder of Christianity" (pp. 262 f.).

On page 73, where the reference is to 1 Cor. 15 51, it is said that "at the coming of Christ some shall arise from sleep, and some shall be changed." This is a most inaccurate statement of what Paul expected to occur at the *parousia*. On page 92 Dr. Gardner must mean Hosea rather than Amos. On page 128, doubtless through inadvertence, the adjective "divine" is used of the Messiah whom the Jews were expecting. They did not ascribe divinity to the Messiah. On page 134 the statement that at the advent of the Lord "the material puts on immateriality" seems to the present writer to imply a complete misunderstanding of Paul's thought at this point. Many scholars will find the author's interpretation of Rom. 3 21-26 on pages 193 ff. unsatisfactory. Finally, an index of the subjects discussed in the work would have made it much more useful for reference.

Professor Gardner has written a very readable and suggestive book. Some of the views which he expresses require further study before they can be confidently accepted or rejected, but in the main his interpretation of Paulinism is sound.

WILLIAM H. P. HATCH.

THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, NEW YORK.